



# Diocesan e-News

## CELEBRATING A DECADE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Australian Catholic University (ACU) celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Clemente Ballarat Program's transformational learning for disadvantaged people in the Ballarat Town Hall on Wednesday, March 21.

Among those who celebrated the milestone was Bishop Paul Bird, Federal Member of Ballarat Catherine King, State Member for Buninyong Geoff Howard, Mayor Samantha McIntosh, representatives from partner organisations - Centacare, The Smith Family, Federation University Australia, the City of Ballarat and United Way, ACU Ballarat Campus Dean Professor Bridget Aitchison, ACU national coordinator of the Clemente Program Associate Professor Peter Howard along with students and volunteers.

Guests heard from two students talking about the impact of the Clemente Program on their lives, a volunteer who talked about why he is involved as a Learning Partner in the program, and speakers about why their community agency is involved. Associate Professor Jeremy Smith from Federation University and Chair of Clemente Ballarat Steering Committee gave a brief history of the program in Ballarat. Associate Professor Howard presented an anthology of the program that began in the US and which he has helped develop in Australia.



The Clemente Australia Program is an educationally focused initiative, founded upon the value of transformational learning for the reengagement of disadvantaged people. Community agencies and universities collaborate to provide supported learning for students.

Associate Professor Howard with others launched the program through ACU's Strathfield campus in Sydney in 2003. It has been introduced to other

campuses including Ballarat in 2008, where ACU leads the program in collaboration with other key agencies such as The Smith Family, United Way Ballarat, Centacare, Federation University and The City of Ballarat.

The program is a community imbedded socially supported university program that aims to break the cycle of inequality, poverty and social injustice for marginalised and disadvantaged people in the Ballarat Community.

Over the last 10 years, there has been one hundred and twenty-six participants – with more students graduating in the upcoming graduation ceremony in April 2018.

Students in the program may have experienced social, financial, educational or physical disadvantage. The student body includes members who are refugees, have mental health issues, have limited English, do not have a Year 12 leaving score, have been geographically isolated, have moved around a lot, and come from “the school of hard knocks”.

Professor Bridget Aitchison, Campus Dean of the ACU Ballarat campus, said the event was a celebration of dedication and passion to developing the lives of local community members in education, research and community engagement.

“ACU is devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, the Clemente program demonstrates our commitment to providing education to all people in the Ballarat Community. The Clemente Program has changed the lives of many people and seen ACU support one hundred and twenty-six participants in the program from this campus alone. We are able to use our resources and our position as a higher education provider to enable disadvantaged adults access to education in their community with the support of local partnerships,” Professor Aitchison said.

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